

THE AUDITOR'S REPORT



News & Updates

from the Office of the State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better



Suzanne M. Bump
State Auditor



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Dear Friend,

Through the Bureau of Special Investigations, my office investigates potential cases of fraud in public benefit programs in the Commonwealth. We have grown increasingly sophisticated in proactively identifying large perpetrators of fraud. While fraud makes up a relatively small amount of total public benefit spending, we know it has a disproportionate impact in weakening our state's social safety net.

However, fraud is only one side of this equation. These programs are also weakened when individuals who qualify for public benefit programs are unable to access them due to barriers—be they technological, cultural, or process-oriented. This is why last year we announced an initiative to conduct audits to identify where these barriers exist, and provide recommendations to address them.

Last month, my office released an audit of the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund, the first in this series examining barriers. This fund provides financial assistance to families with critically ill children to help them cover costs associated with the illness that are not covered by insurance. We found that while the program is doing the good work it is tasked with doing, it takes a long time—on average about 10 months from the date of initial application—for a family to receive assistance. We also provided recommendations that can reduce the time families wait to as little as three months, making this barrier significantly smaller.

It is my hope that through our continued work to identify fraud in our public benefit programs, and reducing barriers to accessing these benefits, we can strengthen our state's social safety net.

Thank you,

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

Recent Audits/Reports

[Chapter 224](#)

[UMass Memorial Medical Center](#)

[Mass School Building Authority](#)

[Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund](#)

[View more audits](#)

Recent Press Releases

[Auditor Bump Releases Report on Impact of Chapter 224](#)

[Audit Finds Umass Memorial Medical Center Did Not Properly Report 80 Instances of Substance-Exposed Newborns](#)

[Auditor Bump Meets With Massachusetts Female Mayors to Discuss Major Issues Impacting Municipalities](#)

[Audit Calls on Administration to Reduce Delays to Providing Financial Relief for Families of Children with Catastrophic Medical Conditions](#)

[Auditor's Office Once Again Receives Highest Rating Possible in Peer Review](#)

[Auditor Bump Announces New Staff Members](#)

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Auditor Bump recently met with (from left to right) Mayors Donna Holaday of Newbury Port, Stephanie Muccini Burke of Medford, Linda Tyer of Pittsfield and Sefatia Romeo Theken of Gloucester to discuss issues impacting their communities.

OSA Focus: Local Voices

When most people think of the Office of the State Auditor (OSA), they think of audits and investigations to identify problems in programs, and suggest strategies to address them. However, that's not all the OSA does.

The OSA, through its Division of Local Mandates (DLM), serves as an important resource to local governments. DLM determines when communities have been subjected to an unfunded mandate by the state, it identifies issues that are straining municipal budgets, and provides recommendations to address these challenges.

Last month, Auditor Suzanne M. Bump met with Mayors Donna Holaday of Newburyport, Stephanie Muccini Burke of Medford, Linda Tyer of Pittsfield, and Sefatia Romeo Theken of Gloucester to hear about the challenges their communities currently face, and their ideas on how the state government can assist in addressing these challenges. These types of meetings play a critical role in helping the OSA focus its efforts and expertise in the areas they can be most helpful.

Much of the conversation focused on challenges these communities face related to education, and local efforts to stretch funding further to support greater student learning. DLM is currently conducting a study on regional schools in the Commonwealth, which will provide recommendations to assist municipalities.

Additionally, Auditor Bump and the Mayors discussed the challenges these communities face related to water infrastructure. Earlier this year, [a report from Bump's office](#) noted that Massachusetts communities anticipate water infrastructure spending needs in excess of \$17.8 billion dollars over the next two decades. The conversation with these mayors highlighted the need for a greater state role providing financial and technical assistance to municipalities in order to meet these needs.

First-hand accounts like these provide critical insight into the issues with which local leaders wrestle. These insights inform the work of OSA, and in turn, help the office develop better solutions to ease these burdens.

OSA's Work Makes Headlines

[Barriers to Benefits: A Forum with State Auditor Bump](#)

This month, Auditor Bump met with staff and residents of the St. Francis House in Boston to discuss barriers individuals face when seeking access to public benefit programs.



Auditor Bump recently met with staff and residents of the St. Francis House to discuss barriers individuals face when seeking public benefits.

[Massachusetts Audit Identifies \\$193 Million in Improper Medicaid Payments Over Five Years for Behavioral Health](#)

Open Minds, a national trade publication focused on behavioral health, highlights a recent audit from the OSA that examined payments by MassHealth related to behavioral health services.

[Bump Calls for Improved Reporting Process for Substance-Exposed Newborns in Audit of Lowell General Hospital](#)

As part of its efforts to promote child welfare, the OSA recently released an audit of Lowell General Hospital which found outdated technology often resulted in slow reporting of substance-exposed newborns.

[Read more coverage of OSA's work](#)

BREAKING: OSA Releases Report on Impacts of Chapter 224 Health Care Law

Last week, the OSA released a report examining the impacts of the health care reform law passed in 2012, Chapter 224. This report provides analysis of trends in health care related to access, cost, quality, workforce, and disparities. We'll have more information in next month's edition of The Auditor's Report, but until then, [you can read the Chapter 224 Report here](#).

Accountability in Action: National Impacts

The Office of the State Auditor has an entire unit dedicated to auditing the state's MassHealth program. This makes sense, considering the program accounts for more than a third of total state spending.

In May, when the Senate passed its version of the budget, the body made clear that it has taken note of the work of the OSA in this realm. It included, for the first time, language that would require MassHealth to develop a plan to address the issues identified in recent audits of that program, and recoup funds for the taxpayers of the Commonwealth.

This unit's work has also attracted national attention. Last month, Auditor Bump and members of her data analytics team were invited to

present at a national forum on Medicaid integrity. Through their presentation, Bump and her team told an audience of government auditors from other states, and representatives from the US Government Accountability Office and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, about how data has expanded the capabilities of the OSA. Through data, the office can now go beyond identifying individual providers that are inappropriately billing MassHealth and instead identify systemic issues in the program that are costing taxpayers millions of dollars annually.

This forum was an important step, not only to raise awareness of the work of Bump's office, but more importantly to build stronger connections with the federal government and other state leaders to ensure the innovative work done in Massachusetts can be used to strengthen Medicaid programs across the nation.



The OSA has recently received national attention for its efforts to improve the performance of the state's Medicaid program—MassHealth—for its innovative use of data to identify systemic challenges in the program. Auditor Bump recently presented the OSA's work at a Medicaid Integrity Forum in South Carolina.

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The Auditor's Report

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